

STORMWATER MATTERS

*A Newsletter for MS4 Communities
in Northwest Indiana*



Northwestern Indiana
Regional Planning
Commission

In this Issue:

- What is a Rain Garden
- Consider a rain garden for your yard
- Tips for a productive rain garden

Helpful websites:

**Stormwater Manager's
Resource Center**
www.stormwatercenter.net

Rain Gardens
www.raingardennetwork.com

Watershed Protection
www.cwp.org

Riverwatch
www.in.gov/dnr/riverwatch

Drain Marking
www.in.gov/dnr/stormdrain

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March Erosion Control Workshops

These workshops were part of a joint educational program tailored to reach regional professionals who are expected to comply with IDEM's new Stormwater rules that are designed to reduce the impact of Stormwater runoff problems associated with construction sites. Alice Deardorff of the Porter County SWCD and Mary Beth Wiseman, coordinator of the NIRPC MS4 Community Partnership were the team members involved in the development of this cooperative venture.

The day-long SWCD workshop provided an explanation of rule 5 guidelines presented by Doug Wolf and Robert Beck, IDEM Stormwater Specialists. Doug and

Robert's presentations gave attendees information needed to include in the development of Stormwater pollution prevention plans (SWPPP) that will ensure compliance throughout the life of a construction project, including best management practices (BMPs) that will be necessary to properly implement the SWPPP.

The NIRPC workshop provided practical information from vendor representatives about the BMPs that were discussed at the SWCD workshop; most attendees at the NIRPC workshop had also attended the SWCD workshop and they were very interested in learning about the materials that will be necessary to implement their SWPPPs. After individual presentations and on-site demonstrations were completed, attendees spent time visiting with the reps about the products they were specifically interested in and obtaining more detailed information.

These two workshops were designed to be complemen-

tary to each other and were valuable educational tools provided to area professionals who are expected to understand the new requirements; coordination between the SWCD and NIRPC provided a level of quality and cost-effectiveness to the educational experience that would have been difficult to achieve working separately. 52 people attended the March 20 workshop and about 40 attended the March 23 workshop; these numbers include regional engineers, building contractors, developers, surveyors, MS4 operators and other interested parties.

Special thanks to Jeff Jones and the Portage Parks Department for providing the location at Founder's Square Park, tents with tables and chairs, and sound system for the March 23 workshop.





What is a rain garden?

Rain Gardens are just what they sound like—gardens that soak up rain water, mainly from your roof, but also from your driveway and lawn. They are landscaped areas planted to wild flowers and other native vegetation to replace areas of lawn. The gardens fill with a few inches of water and allow the water to slowly filter into the ground rather than running off to storm drains. Compared to a patch of conventional lawn, a rain garden allows about 30 to

40% more water to soak into the ground.

Holding back the runoff helps prevent pollutants such as fertilizers from washing off your yard, into storm sewers, and eventually into nearby streams and lakes. By reducing the amount of water that enters the local storm drain systems, rain gardens can also reduce the chances for local flooding, as well as bank and shoreline damage where storm drains empty into streams and

lakes.

People in many parts of the country are starting to build rain gardens in their yards and promoting their use in other locations, such as neighborhood parks. You can help in your own yard by simply building one or more rain gardens to collect runoff from your roof. Rain water can be sometimes collected from your drive way or lawn by locating a rain garden in a low spot where the water naturally drains

Construction Site Basics:

1. Limit the extent and duration of land disturbance.

2. Divert incoming flows and impede internal flows.

3. Install sediment capturing devices to retain sediment picked up on the project site.



Consider a rain garden for your yard

Rain gardens can be your personal contribution to cleaner water, healthier fish and wildlife populations, and a greater improved environment for your family and community. Each rain garden may seem small, but collectively they produce substantial neighborhood and regional environmental benefits. Rain gardens can work for

us in several ways:

- >Increasing the amount of water filtering into the ground, which recharges ground water and helps reduce the amount of pollutants washing off to lakes and streams;
- >Help sustain adequate flows in streams during dry spells;
- >Providing valuable wildlife habitat;

- >Enhancing the beauty of your yard and the neighborhood;
- >Helping protect communities from flooding and draining problems;
- >Help protect streams and lakes from damaging flows and reducing erosion of the streambanks and lakeshores;
- >Reducing the need for costly municipal storm water treatment structures.



Tips for a productive rain garden

>Keep in mind that a rain garden is a “garden” not a prairie. The focus is on flowers, although some grasses can be used.

>When planting the rain garden, ask some friends to help. A few people helping for an hour can be fun for all and will allow you to get the planting done in a couple hours.

>In the weeks after planting, you may want to hoe dandelions and other weeds until the mature garden plants crowd them out.

>As the rain garden matures, you will need to thin the population of some plants to allow others to grow.

>Leave the dead or dormant plants standing over the winter. Many of the plants will provide seed and shelter for birds. In spring cut back or

mow the stalks to allow new shoots to emerge.

> Installation of a rain garden is slightly more work than a comparable area of lawn, but maintenance is low once the plants mature.



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The MS4 Community Partnership:

George van Til – Lake County Surveyor, Kevin Breitzke – Porter County Surveyor, Cedar Lake, Crown Point, Dyer, East Chicago, Gary, Griffith, Highland, Hobart, Lake Station, Merrillville, Munster, New Chicago, Schererville, St. John, Chesterton, Portage, Porter, Valparaiso, Nature Works Conservation District, Twin Creeks Conservation District, Valparaiso Lakes Area Conservation District.

NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

6100 Southport Road
Portage IN 46368

Phone: 219-763-6060
Fax: 219-762-1653
Email: nirpc@nirpc.org

*Visit us on the
web at:*

www.nirpc.org

*Remember,
only rain in
the drain!*

The **Stormwater Matters** newsletter is published by the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission's (NIRPC) Environmental Department as part of the Northwest Indiana MS4 Community outreach program. In addition to providing valuable information to regional MS4 communities, the newsletter provides information to stakeholders on other water efforts, projects, and issues that impact the Region's waterways. This newsletter is published at least quarterly; articles may be submitted to NIRPC's MS4 Community Partnership Coordinator, Sarah Nerenberg, email: snerenberg@nirpc.org

Lake Michigan Districts Household Waste Collection Program

2007 MS4 Community Collection Dates

*Saturday collection times 9am –2 pm

**Friday collection times 1pm–6 pm

June 02* Griffith Public Works
June 30* Hobart City Barns
July 14* Chesterton Westchester IS
Aug 03** St John Lake Central HS
Aug 18 * Portage HS
Sept 8 * Lake County Fairgrounds
Sept 22* Highland Public Works
Oct 20* Valpo Expo Center
Oct 27 Munster Town Hall

Dates in red include the gas can exchange program. Exchange your old gas can for a new, environmentally friendly 2.5 gallon CARB gas can.

Limit: one new can per family.

What can I dispose of?

Aerosols

Automotive Supplies: antifreeze, oils and other fluids

Batteries: automotive and household

Corrosives

Mercury Containing Products: fluorescent tubes, thermometers– silver bulbs, thermostats, etc

Paint and Related Products: oil based paints, thinners, solvents

Pesticides: fungicides, herbicides, insecticides, etc

Waste Fuels: diesel, gasoline, kerosene, other flammable liquids

What is not accepted?

Ammunition and Explosives: contact your local fire department for disposal

Commercial Hazardous Waste

Latex Paint: remove lid from latex paint cans, allow to dry completely and dispose of with regular garbage.

Call 1-800-946-4449 for more information.

Remember, you're not just walking the dog.



Clean up after your pet.

Did you know that pet waste has bacteria that makes our lakes and rivers unsafe for swimming and other recreational activities? That happens when pet waste is left on our sidewalks or yards gets washed into storm drains or roadside ditches that lead directly to our lakes and rivers

What can you do? Simple.

No matter where you are dispose of your pet's waste promptly in the toilet or trash.

Find out more at www.semcog.org

Brought to you by the Southeast Michigan Partners for Clean Water